

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 12, 2007

### **LARSON FIGHTS FOR FIREFIGHTERS' RIGHTS**

Next week, the Ways and Means Committee will hold hearings on legislation that protects and cares for our country's war-fighters and first responders. The legislation is a package of incentives and benefits to honor their sacrifice, including a section created by Congressman John Larson CT-01, Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus, that protects certain tax benefits for volunteer firefighters. Congressman Larson has worked hard on behalf of local volunteer firefighters to assure them the benefits they deserve. He is thrilled this proposal will be included in the upcoming legislation.

**The hearing will take place on Wednesday, October 17, 2007, at 10:00 a.m. in room 1100 Longworth House Office Building.**

### **BACKGROUND**

The number of volunteer firefighters in this country has been declining each year. To combat that, many towns and cities offered tax abatements and incentives to anyone who would volunteer their time as a firefighter, emergency medical technician or ambulance driver in their town. South Windsor was one of the first communities in Connecticut to enact such a program. And, the number of volunteer firefighters in the town immediately increased. But, the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) ruled that any property tax abatement would be considered income by the Federal Government and taxed as such. The town's hands were tied. The incentive they had hoped would increase the ranks of their firefighters was diminished. Towns all over Connecticut discontinued their tax abatement programs or chose not to start new ones.

### **SOLUTION**

In the legislation that the Ways and Means Committee will consider next week, Congressman Larson's provision would change the tax code to make the tax abatements that firefighters receive not subject to income taxes.

With the news that hearings will be held on the legislation, Congressman Larson said:

**"It is our country's duty to honor our first responders – those serving overseas as well as those protecting us at home. This legislation will restore the benefits to these brave men and women that they deserve. It will also help towns around the country recruit new volunteer firefighters and retain those who are already serving."**

Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-05) said:

**"In Connecticut, we rely on our first responders to keep our communities safe from everything from terror threats to flooding and fires. Especially important are the thousands of volunteer first responders in Connecticut who balance both full-time jobs and their roles in protecting our communities. This common sense bill simply makes it a little easier for them to continue to provide their crucial services."**

Congressman Joe Courtney (CT-02) said:

**"Each and every day, volunteer emergency responders across eastern Connecticut work selflessly to protect our families and our communities. The very least we can do is make it just a little easier for them to pay their bills as they continue to serve. This hearing is an important step forward in this effort, and I applaud Congressman Larson for his advocacy on behalf of volunteer responders across Connecticut."**

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